



Awakenings

"Only by love is love awakened."

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries :::::: Volume 8 :::::: Issue 4 ::::::



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Renewed Heart Ministries
P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901
Phone: 304.520.0030
Email: info@renewedheartministries.com

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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery



A Goat Loving Shepherd

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

“Let us behold Him in our mind, and let us look with the eyes of our soul unto His long-suffering will. Let us note how free from anger He is towards all His creatures.”

—Clement of Rome (1st Century);
1 Clement 19:3

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous (Matthew 5:44-45)

If I could attribute any of the words of Jesus' awakening my heart twenty-two years ago to a radically different picture of God from what was being presented by my religious community at the time, it would be these words right here.

It was a brisk New England morning and I was sixteen. Through a series of events, I found myself early in the morning, at a dear friend's home, alone with God, on my knees in tears. You see, I was experiencing something very close to what Peter called an *ekstasis* (see Acts 10:10). Up until that moment, the God I was endeavoring to “obey” was, in my mind's/heart's eye, a chiefly retributive God of strict adherence to a system of reward and punishment—punitively. What I received that early morning was an encounter with a God who had never, at any stage of my life, responded to me, nor my actions, retributively, punitively, but had each step of the way been endeavoring to save me, restore me, and heal me—even before any consciousness of my own need for salvation, as well as long before any requests on my part for such a salvation. This was a God who felt deep love and endearment for me; a God moved by such love and endearment to have been convinced of saving me long before I was even interested in being saved.

But I would not be so easily convinced. I had long been entrenched in a

religious experience rooted in a very retributive/punitive picture of God. My heart fought back.

“Okay, God,” I prayed, “Let's say I just take this life you're giving me and I use it to become your enemy; I simply use You for my own selfish aims. Or worse, let's say I take this life and use it to curse You and persecute those who follow you. What if I take this life you're giving me and choose to become your enemy?!” (I was deeply entrenched in the lie that only the belief in a retributive God was powerful enough to affect the choices you make with your life.).

In a voice I still remember to this day, bizarre as it may sound, God spoke these words: “If you choose to take my love and the life that am giving you vainly and choose to hate me in response, I will continue to be good to you. If you choose to spend the rest of your life cursing me, I will bless you nonetheless for it. If you should choose to simply use me and my love and this life for your own self centered agendas, I will continue to intercede for you, leaning into that intercession for you with greater intensity and greater intent. In short, Herbie, if you should choose to take this life and become my enemy, I will love you and continue to love you all the more, because I am a God who LOVES my enemies!” (See Luke 6:27-28.)

It was at that moment I experienced a life-changing, transforming breakthrough deep within my own thoughts and feelings concerning God. I fell to my knees, tears began to flow down my cheeks as I knelt there alone with this God, no longer fearing how this God would treat me if I did not “obey,” but in deep

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A Goat Loving Shepherd cont'd from page

heart-overwhelming awe and wonder at how this God would treat me even if didn't. What happened next was the defining moment of my life. If this God was going to love me, giving me life, blessing me whether I served this God or not, my heart was overcome by really only one option: What else could I do? How else could I respond to a God this in love with me, but to take this life that was being given to me, no strings attached, and to give it back to this God, offering the rest of my life to helping others see what kind of a being this God really was? I had never seen God like this before, and I had a hunch there might be others like me, who God longed would see Him similarly. It was to this aim that I would dedicate my life.

What does it mean to truly encounter the God Jesus spoke of, as well as the love of this God, as truly being as indiscriminate as the shining sun or the falling rain?

"...For [God] makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:44-45).

In Luke's gospel, Luke goes a step further and, without the comparison, only mentions Matthew's "unrighteous."

"...[God] is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked." (Luke 6:35).



Testimonies

"Thanks and praise to our awesome God for all the wonderful blessings He has given us through you and the Follow the Lamb series. Though the message is not new, hearing it again from a fresh perspective is both reaffirming and incredibly inspiring." - *CM*

"I have continued to pray about this issue but in recent weeks have really intensified my prayer conversation with the Lord regarding fellowship and service.

Then the Holy Spirit brought me to Renewed Heart Ministries' website and the light went on! I feel led to start a HeartGroup in my area. Please pray for me, and all who will be involved in our community." - *C*

"Herb, You have been a blessing in uplifting and pointing to Jesus, and more importantly you have been used to bless my church family. You have opened the door for conversation to now begin. I salute your courage and tact, your love for Jesus and your perseverance in the Spirit." - *AC*

A passage that is raised often to try and counter this radically beautiful picture of God is the parable Jesus told of the sheep and goats. "See, see, see," some have said, "there will come a day when God treats two groups of people very differently!" If this is true, it will lose nothing by closer investigation. It is true that different children need relating to in different ways at times by their parents; and there are some differences in the way the sheep and goats are treated in this passage. But the question I want you to ask is whether or not there is a difference in the intended outcome within the heart God in this passage.

Let's look at the phrase normally used:

"Then they [the goats] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous [the sheep] to eternal life." (Matthew 25:46).

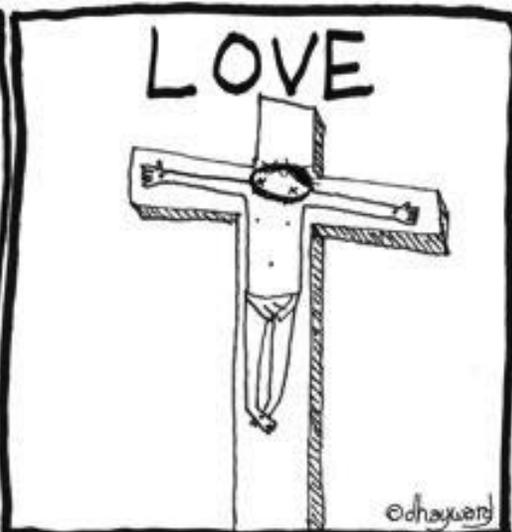
The Greek Word Matthew chose to place in the mouth of Jesus for "punishment" is *kolasis*. I will quote the Greek scholar Joseph Henry Thayer D.D., from his famous Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon

of the New Testament. The two Greek words Matthew could have chosen for "punishment" were either *timoria* or *kolasis*. Matthew chose *kolasis*. Dr. Thayer states, "The noted definition of Aristotle, which distinguishes *kolasis* from *timoria* as that which (is *disciplinary* and) has reference to him who suffers, while the latter (is *penal* and) has reference to the satisfaction of him who inflicts..." (emphasis added).

There are exceptions, but in most occurrences in the ancient world, *kolasis* (which comes from its root word which means "to prune") is restorative in nature while *timoria* is more punitive or penal. (William D. Mounce in Mounce's Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament also agrees.)

God's heart toward both the sheep and the goats is the same. Although the goats require *kolasis* where the sheep do not, God's goal is to restore, heal, and save. (Whether any of the goats will respond to the *kolasis* of God in the way God desires is not mentioned by Jesus in the parable.)

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MINISTRY UPDATE

A God Who Looks Like Jesus
North Battleford,
Saskatchewan, Canada
February 21-22, 2014

As I write to you, it is presently -17°F here in Battleford—and boy, is it cold! But what the weather has lacked for in warmth this weekend was made up for by the warmth, love and kindness of a little church I have just had the privilege of spending the last twenty-four hours with. I have just finished my final of four presentations, gotten back to the place I am staying, and I had to open my computer and write to you of the beautiful things that I saw happen today for the Kingdom.

The four presentations I gave were:

A Jesus-Like God

The wonderful revelation that God looks like Jesus and why that creates a problem.

God in Conflict

The answer that the Jesus story gives us to the question of why the world could be filled with such suffering if there is a God out there like Jesus.

The Victory of God

Understanding what the life, death and resurrection of Jesus has accomplished for every man, woman and child, and what that promises us concerning the restoration of the reign of Christ on Earth once again.

A Jesus-Like Church

One way we can communally (as opposed to individually) practice the one-anothers of the New Testament, being transformed as a body into a church that looks like Jesus, putting on display a God who looks like Jesus, as well as a world that will one day look like Jesus once again.

William Temple once said, “If our picture of God is wrong, the more religious we become, the more dangerous we become to ourselves and to everyone around us.” Where many today are saying that the solution is to throw out

the idea of a God entirely, this weekend I proposed what could happen if we simply began to believe that God actually really does look like Jesus. I’ll be placing the four presentations on our website this upcoming week so you, too, wherever this finds you, can participate in last weekend’s events. We eventually become, quite simply, like the God we choose to believe in. To choose to believe that God looks like Jesus and then to allow such a God to love us too should not only make us more loving people, but in so doing create quite a loving world.

For all of you who were praying for this weekend, thank you! God showed up over and over, and I can say beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ’s reign was enlarged and His Kingdom advanced in the lives and hearts of those who attended.

Check out these presentations at www.renewedheartministries.com/AudioPresentationSeries.aspx?series=44

A Goat Loving Shepherd cont'd from page 3

It is worth noting that the Pharisees, who were the theologically liberal (yet legalistically conservative) group of Jesus' day, had embraced the belief in a conscious, eternal post-mortem torment. Many scholars today believe this is not found in ancient Judaism but was a belief that entered into Jewish thinking through the influence of the Hellenism of the Greeks. The words the Pharisees used to describe their belief in post mortem eternal torment were *adios timoria* [*adios*—eternal in duration or time; *timoria*—punitive punishment]. Matthew subversively places two subtly different Greek words in the mouth of Jesus—*aionion kolasis* [*aionion*—eternal in quality or nature; *kolasis*—restorative punishment].

It is also interesting to note that within The Catacomb of Priscilla there is a very intriguing rendition of this parable. The Catacomb of Priscilla is on the Via Salaria in Rome, Italy, and is situated in what was a quarry in Roman times. This quarry was used for Christian burials from the late 2nd century through the 4th century. Within this catacomb we find ancient Christian wall paintings, as with most catacombs. The puzzlement is when we get to the painting called *The Good Shepherd*. Just as in Matthew 25, the sheep are to the shepherd's right and the goats are to the shepherd's left. But what has raised the most questions is that on the shoulders of the shepherd himself, we do not find him carrying his lost sheep; on the contrary, we find him carrying his lost goat. This would have been during a time when Christians needed reminding of one of the central tenants of the teachings of Christ, which was

loving your enemy. Every person is sacred, even the goats.

Today there are three paradigms that presently exist within Christianity. For those who believe the fate of the goats will be *torment*, I'm quite sure the *kolasis* of God is not pleasurable. The psychological realities that those like Stalin, Hitler, and others will experience when they step into the presence of Him who is love and simultaneously encounter self-realization and the horrors of what they have done, I'm quite sure will be no pleasure cruise. For those who believe the fate of the goats will be *annihilation*, I'm quite sure that everything that is out of harmony with Christ's Kingdom will be consumed. But for those who are endeavoring to reconcile the restorative justice Jesus attributed to His Father (rather than the humanly intuitive retributive justice), I'm quite sure that God's intent in the end will be just what it always has been for both the sheep and the goats: restoration, healing, salvation. Again, the parable leaves unstated whether or not any of the goats will respond. But the difference between a sheep and a goat is not what is in God's heart for either, but rather the difference is in what God must do to save both.

I'll close this week with the depiction of the Great Shepherd in Revelation 19.

"Coming out of his MOUTH is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will SHEPHERD the nations with a STAFF of iron." (Revelation 19:15, emphasis added)

"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline." (Revelation 3:19)

According to Jesus, there are no more "us" and "them" in the heart of God. God loves, blesses, does good to, and intercedes for *even the goats*. ■

Testimonies

Herb, I'm so very blessed by your messages. Thank you for all your dedication in bringing the gospel to others. I, as well as others, have learned a lot! We are seeing our Heavenly Father differently! - **JD**

I just want to thank you and Renewed Heart Ministries for all you give and the message you share! God's love has changed my life and is healing our family. Thanks could hardly be enough, but I just want you to know how deeply grateful I am. - **NG**

Thanks so much for your ministry and for your teachings. I always enjoy hearing from you about God's love. Now to share it with the world! Keep up the good news! - **TC**

Thank you! God has certainly given you a special gift, and I am thanking Him today for you. I have never seen God like this! This is worth living (and dying) for. It's my prayer that His Spirit keeps blessing you the way you have blessed us. - **RP**

You have greatly blessed our church with your energy and passion for Jesus. WE are "seeing" Him much more clearly. May our small thanks energize you to keep enlarging the Kingdom, one heart at a time. - **PS**

Thank you for your messages on peace and nonviolence. I cheer you on. Bless you for all you do. - **LG**

MINISTRY UPDATE

The Jesus Dialogue Pullman, Washington March 7-15, 2014

First, let me thank each of you who were praying for this event. I'm packing up my things this morning and heading home, and I am just overwhelmed once again at the way I saw the teachings of Jesus change hearts and lives this past week.

I met some very precious people from the community as well and had the immense privilege of seeing some old friends once again. I've been invited to share in this community three times over the last fourteen years, and I absolutely loved what I saw Jesus doing in the lives of those I have only had the pleasure of keeping up with from a distance. There is a movement of God's spirit—I see evidence of it in almost every location I visit of those

sincerely desiring to return to the teachings of Jesus and to enlarge his Kingdom here on earth. This movement crosses all peripheral, man-made boundaries, and yet it is centered deeply in the Jesus of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

I would be lying if I said that, as we revisited together Jesus' Sermon on the Mount this week, there were not times when even those who had been following Jesus for many years now were not challenged by some of the things Jesus taught. G.K. Chesterton is famous for his summary of Christian history that does not prove that Jesus' teachings have "been tried and found wanting, but rather they have been found difficult and left untried." But rarely have I witnessed the sincere openness and dedication to following Jesus as I have witnessed among this group. If I could sum up the spirit I saw among my friends in Pullman, it would be that once they "see" something as being what Jesus truly taught—difficult as those teachings may be for those in our Western, Americanized culture today (the favor of God, nonviolence, helping the

poor, etc.)—they strive to begin putting it into practice. I was so encouraged this past week by the sincere desire to follow Jesus that I witnessed being awakened in those who visited from the community (even those who have a low tolerance for religious events) as well as the passion to follow Jesus I saw rekindled or growing deeper among those who have been following Jesus for quite some time.

Lastly, there was an overwhelming response to moving away from a passive spectatorship within the small groups to experimenting with the open, mutual, participatory nature of the New Testament "one-anothers."

We aren't called to change the world for Jesus, but to put on display what the world changed by Jesus looks like and invite others to join us in doing so. This week, by Jesus' love, I saw many either enter the Kingdom, or choose to go "further up and further in."

Again, for all of you who were praying, thank you. Your prayers were answered in one beautiful demonstration after another. For the Kingdom, thank you.

New Book!

Servant God by a multiple authors including Herb Montgomery.

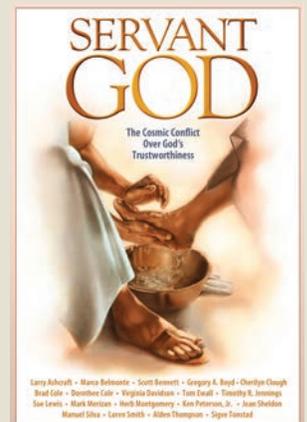
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HeartGroups Testimony

This month we'd like to share with you a sampling of quotations regarding the nature of the early church of the New Testament in hopes that you will be encouraged and inspired, to keep practicing the open, mutual, participatory character of the early Church.

"The clergy-laity dichotomy is a direct carry-over from pre-Reformation Roman Catholicism and a throwback to the Old Testament priesthood. It is one of the principal obstacles to the church effectively being God's agent of the kingdom today because it creates a false idea that only 'holy men,' namely, ordained ministers, are really qualified and responsible for leadership and significant ministry. In the New Testament there are functional distinctions between various kinds of ministries but no hierarchical division between clergy and laity. The New Testament teaches us that the church is a community in which all are gifted and all have ministry." -Howard Snyder

"Prayer was offered, as in the Synagogue, but not in stated liturgical form. It was uttered freely, on the impulse of the Spirit, and was presented in the name of Christ, the Intercessor...The Christian faith gave rise to hymns of a new character, often produced in the heat of the moment and almost as soon forgotten; but sometimes short lyrics of real beauty were treasured and repeated...Chief of all these [elements] was the observance of the Supper...This, indeed, was not so much a part of the worship as the vessel which contained all the parts.

The purpose of the Christian meeting was to hold the common meal, and to make it a memorial of Jesus' Last Supper with the disciples ...The exercise of the spiritual gifts was thus the characteristic element in primitive worship. Those gifts might vary in their nature and degree according to the capacity of each individual, but they were bestowed on all and room was allowed in the service for the participation of all who were present. "When you meet together," says Paul, "each of you hath a psalm, a teaching, a tongue, an interpretation." Every member was expected to contribute something of his own to the common worship ...Worship in those first days was independent of all forms." -Ernest F. Scott, from *The Nature of the Early Church*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941, pp. 75,77,79,87.

"Increasing institutionalism is the clearest mark of early Catholicism - when church becomes increasingly identified with institution, when authority becomes increasingly coterminous with office, when a basic distinction between clergy and laity becomes increasingly self-evident, when grace becomes increasingly narrowed to well-defined ritual acts. We saw above that such features were absent from first generation Christianity, though in the second generation the picture was beginning to change." -D.G. Dunn, *Unity & Diversity in the New Testament*, Westminster Press, 1977, p. 351.

"In the Catholic Church there are two classes, clergy and laity...This structure does not correspond to what Jesus did and taught. Consequently it has not had a good effect in the history of the Church... Among his disciples Jesus did

Schedule

MAY 16-24, 2014

Summersville Adventist
Church
Summersville, WV
304.872.6958

JUNE 6-8, 2014

Southpoint Adventist Church
Jacksonville, FL
904.571.6399

JUNE 20-29, 2014

Christchurch New Zealand
Christchurch, New Zealand
+64 3 382 9527

Quotable Quotes

"Let us take our body for an example. The head is nothing without the feet, and the feet are nothing without the head; yea, the very smallest members of our body are necessary and useful to the whole body. But all work harmoniously together, and unite in *mutual submission* for the preservation of the whole body."

-Clement of Rome,
Later Half of the First
Century; 1 Clement 37:5,
(emphasis added)

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HeartGroup... cont'd from page 5

not want any distinction of class or rank...In contradiction to this instruction of Jesus, a 'hierarchy,' a 'sacred authority,' was nevertheless formed in the third century." - Herbert Haag (a Roman Catholic), *Upstairs, Downstairs: Did Jesus Want a Two-Class Church?*, Crossroad, 1997, p. 109.

...[This practice] goes astray, of course, when it translates to mean that only ordination gives competence, authority, and the right of professional governance. It goes further astray when eventually all jurisdictional and administrative powers in the church come to be seen as an extension of the sacramental powers conferred at ordination. In short, there is a movement here away from the more pristine collaborative and mutual ministries of the New Testament." -

William Bausch, (*A Roman Catholic*) in *Traditions, Tensions, Transitions in Ministry*, Twenty-Third Publications, 1982, pp. 54, 30.

"There are few more reliable constants running through all human society than the special place every human community makes for the professional religionist... in every case he disposes a unique quality, which he usually possesses for life, which alone qualifies him for his function, and beside which the mass of men are identifiable negatively as "laymen," i.e., non-bearers of this special quality...One person per place is enough to do what he needs to do...the clergyman mediates between the common life and the realm of the "invisible" or the "spiritual"...No one balks at what his services cost" -John H. Yoder, "The Fullness of Christ," reprinted in *Searching Together*, 11:3, 1982, pp. 4-7.

"Properly speaking, New Testament Christianity knows nothing of the word "sacrament," which belongs essentially to the heathen world of the Graeco-Roman empire and which unfortunately some of the Reformers unthinkingly took over from ecclesiastical tradition. For this word, and still more the overtones which it conveys, is the starting point for those disastrous developments which began soon to transform the community of Jesus into the Church which is first and foremost a sacramental Church" - Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, Lutterworth, 1952, pp. 72-73).



Featured Presentation

This month we would like to share a presentation given by Herb last month where he further explains the difference between God's restorative Justice and our ideas of retributive Justice in Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats. Both *Timoria* and *Kolasis* are contrasted using source material contemporary to Jesus' day. We felt it was a beautiful revelation from Jesus of a Shepherd's last attempt to *restore*. This presentation was given as part of an effort to reach out to University students in Pullman, WA.



Do I Have To Believe In Hell? (updated version) by Herb Montgomery.

Renewed Heart Ministries provides its resources free of charge. Jesus commanded, "Freely you have received, freely give." We at RHM take this command very seriously. Philosophically we have a difficult time charging money to people for things God has given us for free.

In order to do this, we are entirely dependent on the contributions of our supporters. If you would like to make a one-time gift or offer monthly support, please send your contributions to the following address:

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Lewisburg, WV 24901**

Contributions can also be made online at:
www.renewedheartministries.com

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